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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 05/10/06

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Prime Minister's schedule, May 9

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 10, 2006

09:01

Attended cabinet meeting in Diet building. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nagase remained in the room.

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09:34

Arrived at Kantei.

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10:13

Attended grand cordon personal investiture ceremony at the Imperial Palace.

10:52

Returned to Kantei.

13:23

Attended award ceremony for the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star at the Imperial Palace.

15:04

Met US Cherry Blossom Queen Kristina Hillboldt and Japanese Cherry Blossom Queen Tomoko Miki. Met afterwards with Vice Finance Minister for International Affairs Watanabe.

16:30

Met with Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Takenaka.

17:12

Met with Financial Affairs Minister Yosano.

19:07

Dined with secretaries at Australian restaurant in Akasaka.

21:21

Returned to his official residence.

4) USFJ realignment up in the air

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)
May 10, 2006

The realignment of US forces in Japan is up in the air. The Defense Agency wants to revise the Japan-US Security Joint Declaration in order to redefine the bilateral alliance. The agency also wants to renew the Japan-US Defense Cooperation Guidelines in an aim to clear up bilateral cooperation between the two countries. However, there are negative views in the government about that move. In the meantime, the United States also wants to go ahead with actual joint operations. Tokyo and Washington will likely continue to jockey for their respective standpoints ahead of a Japan-US summit slated for late next month.

"Our bilateral alliance is now about to enter a new phase with the realignment of US forces in Japan, and we should discuss ideals and objectives." Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga made this statement before the House of Councillors Foreign and Defense Affairs Committee in its meeting held yesterday. With this, Nukaga reiterated his willingness to revise the security declaration.

The Japanese and US governments released the security declaration when the two countries' leaders met in 1996. In those days, the Soviet threat had disappeared after the Cold War. Meanwhile, North Korea was suspected of developing nuclear weapons. Factoring in these uncertainties, the joint declaration set forth the importance of a close partnership between Japan and the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

In an aim to revise the joint declaration, Nukaga is laying

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emphasis on his notion of globalizing the Japan-US bilateral alliance. "We should consider how to define our international peace cooperation." With this, Nukaga talked about Japan's role as a US ally.

Following the 1996 security declaration, Japan sent Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to the Indian Ocean and also dispatched Ground Self-Defense Force troops to Iraq. Japan's Self-Defense Forces have been teaming up with US forces in their international activities. The SDF's role was to back up the war on terror in order to prevent Iraq and other nations from becoming terrorist hotbeds in their political and security destabilization.

Reason came after reality. Even so, many in the Defense Agency are insisting on redefining Japan's role in its international activities. "We should clear up our bilateral tasks and efforts for international activities in a revised security declaration," a senior official of the agency noted. Satoshi Morimoto, director of the Institute of World Studies at Takushoku University, has also suggested the need to revise the security declaration. "North Korea launched a Taepodong missile, and the September 11 terrorist attacks also took place," Morimoto noted. He added: "China's military power is also different from that of ten years ago. In all senses, the security environment has undergone a sea change."

The Defense Agency wants to have a new security declaration released at the scheduled summit, and the agency also wants to have the new security declaration specify a course of action to renew the defense guidelines. This is the same roadmap as that for the security declaration issued 10 years ago and the defense guidelines revised in 1997.

However, such a move was halted. "We won't go so far as to review the guidelines." This statement came from Foreign Minister Taro Aso right before the May 1 meeting of the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee, or SCC for short and known as a "two-plus-two" meeting of cabinet ministers for foreign and defense affairs. There are negative views in the government about revising the security declaration. "We've already declared global cooperation, though not much has been done about it," a government source said.

In addition, Aso has also suggested the need to detail the Japan-US security arrangement to make it function effectively. This also can be taken as reflecting the US government's standpoint.

Japan and the United States, in their last revised defense guidelines, clarified their intention to study bilateral defense planning in anticipation of emergencies in Japan. However, the two governments have failed to work it out, and Washington's frustration has been growing. The US government therefore wants to shape plans for actual combat operations instead of revising the guidelines over again, according to a defense-related lawmaker of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

5) Defense chief Nukaga: Speed up revising bilateral defense planning

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 10, 2006

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At a session yesterday of the House of Councillors Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense, Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga revealed that his agency would accelerate the work of revising bilateral defense planning between Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the US military in a contingency involving Japan. He stated: "The plan should have been revised. Since we fall behind, we will speed up the work."

6) Construction of Futenma alternative facility will cost over 300 billion yen, 100 billion yen less expensive than Henoko offshore plan

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 10, 2006

An outline of the plan to build an alternative facility for the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station at the coastline of Camp Schwab in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, became clear yesterday. The facility will occupy a total space of 180 hectares. Of it, about 20% will be built on the land portion of the base with the remaining 80% on reclaimed land. The alternative facility is expected to be completed by 2014 at a cost of 300 to 350 billion yen -- 100 billion yen less than the previous Henoko offshore plan. The government plans to determine the plan in detail by the summer based on talks with the Okinawa and Nago municipal governments to begin environment assessment procedures in the fall.

The US force realignment final report, released on May 1, specified the construction of two runways in a V shape measuring 600 meters each and 1,800 meters in total including the overruns.

It also became clear that reclamation would cost 200 billion yen and that the construction of such facilities as the runways, apron, aircraft hanger, and the relocation of existing facilities from Camp Schwab to the training range would come to over 200 billion yen.

7) MSDF Aegis ship to participate in US test for 1st time

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Abridged)
May 10, 2006

An Aegis-equipped destroyer of the Maritime Self-Defense Force will participate in an intercept test to be conducted next month by the United States for missile defense in waters off Hawaii with an Aegis ship's SM-3 sea-based intercept missiles, the MSDF announced yesterday. The MSDF destroyer will radar-track the target, according to the MSDF.

This is the first time for the MSDF to participate in an intercept missile test with its Aegis vessel. "We'd like to improve our interoperability at sea," MSDF Chief of Staff Takashi Saito said. Japan and the United States will further joint naval operations including intelligence sharing.

According to the MSDF, participating in the MD test is the Kirishima, a 7,250-ton destroyer, which was staged in the Arabian Sea for refueling missions. In the MD test, an Aegis vessel of the US Navy is to intercept a mockup ballistic missile with an SM-3 missile. The Kirishima will track the mockup projectile's path to back up the US Navy.

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8) Japan Association of Corporate Executives urges prime minister to reconsider his Yasukuni visits; Proposes construction of secular memorial

ASAHI (Page 1) (Full)
May 10, 2006

The Japan Association of Corporate Executives (JACE or Keizai Doyukai) yesterday released a set of proposals on the future of

Japan-China relations, which included words dissuading Prime Minister Koizumi from visiting Yasukuni Shrine. It is unusual for any economic organization to oppose the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni in its policy proposals. The report also proposed that the state construct a secular memorial to offer condolences to all war victims, including civilians. The JACE noted that the package was mapped out based on the national memorial project plan proposed by a private advisory council set up by Yasuo Fukuda, when he was chief cabinet secretary. The organization's proposals could affect the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) presidential election in September.

Concerning the present state, which does not permit the holding of a bilateral summit, the package noted: "Taking any action that makes Asian countries, such as China, entertain doubts about Japan, could lead to undermining what has been achieved in the postwar period. The prime minister should exert self-constraint on such actions that would not benefit Japan's national interests." The business leaders thus took the view that the situation has become extremely serious.

The report also pointed out that Prime Minister Koizumi's Yasukuni visits are hindering a resumption of summit-level exchanges. It then urged the prime minister to reconsider his Yasukuni visits, arguing that a national consensus on visits to Yasukuni Shrine by a prime minister has yet to be obtained, questioning whether the shrine is an appropriate place for renewing a pledge never to fight a war again, and raising doubts from the perspective of separation of state and religion.

The report also sought China's understanding for Japan's soul-searching and to recognize its contributions to Asia. It called on China to promote patriotism in education in an objective and fair manner.

President Kakutaro Kitashiro, chairman of IBM Japan, told a news conference: "We issued those proposals from a standpoint that the propriety of visiting Yasukuni Shrine is an issue that should be determined at Japan's own judgment. We thought that in Japan's view, it would be better if the prime minister refrained from visiting Yasukuni. It is undesirable from a national security standpoint, too, for the peoples of Japan and China to hold confrontational feelings toward each other. Such feelings will also hamper stable economic development."

The business organization discussed the set of proposals at an executive meeting on April 21. It revealed that among about 270 executives, approximately 70 attended, of whom about 60 favored the proposal, while 11 or 12 opposed it. The motion was adopted by a majority. It is unusual for the JACE to take a vote on such a proposal. It was the first time since Kitashiro became president.

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9) Chinese ambassador calls for improvement in Japan-China relations

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
May 10, 2006

Delivering a speech at a lecture sponsored by the Asia Research Council, chaired by former Ambassador to the US Nobuo Matsunaga, at a Tokyo hotel yesterday, Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi called for improvement in the strained relations between Japan and China. To do so, Wang stressed the need for both sides to (1) establish the goal of promoting Asia as a common interest; (2) share roles and complement each other to pursue common interests; and (3) shift Japan-China relations from the current vicious cycle to a virtuous cycle.

The ambassador said:

"Even in view of gross domestic product (GDP) and trade value, the two countries have a major impact on the Asian region as a whole, going beyond just the bilateral relationship. Setting the

promotion of Asia as a common interest, both countries should reach consensus to that end."

Wang also cited the following remarks made by Chinese President Hu Jintao when he met with seven Japan-China friendship groups: China (1) will maintain the stance of giving priority to Japan; (2) will try to deepen mutual understanding by expediting private-sector exchanges; and (3) is ready to hold a summit if the Japanese leader promises not to visit Yasukuni Shrine.

The ambassador added: "This message reflects the Chinese government's willingness to resolve problems pending between the two countries. How to overcome the (Yasukuni) issue, however, is Japan's problem in the end."

10) First step toward improving Japan-China relations with foreign ministerial talks on natural gas exploration likely to occur shortly, but optimism not allowed

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
May 10, 2006

Through the meeting yesterday of the Japanese and Chinese vice foreign ministers to discuss comprehensive policy, it has become likely that Japan-China foreign ministerial talks will take place by the end of the month. The Japanese government was pleased with this outcome, noting: "It is significant for the foreign ministers of the two countries to have a face-to-face meeting after a lapse of nearly one year." But no optimism is allowed about whether relations with China will improve, because Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine have cast a long shadow over bilateral ties. In addition, senior officials of Japan and China are expected to meet next week to discuss natural gas exploration in the East China Sea, but given the wide gap in views between the two countries, it is unlikely for both sides to meet halfway, many observers say.

On a possible meeting between Foreign Minister Aso and his Chinese counterpart, Li Zhaoxing, Prime Minister Koizumi late yesterday said firmly: "Doesn't this mean that (China) has given

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importance to the Japan-China friendship as we have expected? Isn't it that China is realizing that it is strange not to hold a summit meeting because of one controversial issue (Yasukuni Shrine)?" Earlier in the day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe told the press: "Japan thinks it is necessary to hold talks. For China, too, isn't it necessary to hold talks?" Abe thus emphasized that holding talks would benefit both Japan and China.

Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi yesterday delivered a speech in Tokyo, in which he stated: "Holding foreign ministerial talks is a big push for (Japan-China relations) to move into a virtuous cycle."

The foreign ministerial talks are expected to occur on the sidelines of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) in Qatar set for May 23. If realized, they will be the first ones after the ones held on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Kyoto last May.

In the talks, Foreign Minister Aso is likely to point out the importance of continuing political dialogue between Japan and China. He also intends to discuss such issues as the now suspended six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear ambitions. But China's intention appears to be "making a direct criticism of Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine," according to a Japanese government official. A heated discussion between Aso and his Chinese counterpart is also expected, because Aso often irritates China by making hawkish remarks, for instance, calling China a threat.

11) Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi eager to bring about Japan-China foreign ministerial discourse

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)

May 10, 2006

Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wang Yi yesterday delivered a speech in Tokyo in which he cited the fact that no foreign ministerial talks between Japan and China have been held for about a year and indicated his intention to rectify the situation, noting: "I hope to see them realized. In order to put (Japan-China relations) in a virtuous cycle, dialogue at various levels will be essential for the two countries."

Wang referred to a growing sense of alarm in Japan toward China, which continues to grow, and asserted: "China has no intention of becoming the leader of Asia. The premise that Japan and China will compete for leadership does not exist." Wang emphasized the need for Japan and China to work together for economic development in Asia.

12) Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda to leave for US today; Aims to call attention to his differences with Koizumi; Growing expectations for his ability to widen personal network

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Excerpts)
May 10, 2006

By Nakahiro Iwata

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, one of the major contenders to succeed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, will be

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visiting Washington starting May 10. In the United States, Fukuda intends to sell himself as an expert on diplomacy by holding in-depth discussions with members of Congress, researchers, and other leading figures, while minimizing courtesy calls on high-level government officials.

This past March, Fukuda visited South Korea and met with President Roh Moo Hyun and other leaders. During the recent Golden Week holidays, he traveled to Jordan and the United Arab Emirates and met with key government officials. In the meantime, he met with US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and others at home and

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exchanged views on Japan-China relations and Japan-US relations.

Fukuda's emphasis on Asia diplomacy is increasing his chances of criticizing "Koizumi diplomacy." Describing Japan's current inability to hold top-level talks with China and South Korea as "abnormal," Fukuda lashes out at the current administration's attitude regarding historical perceptions, including Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine: "Past politicians were prudent enough not to cause trouble. But these days, even when someone in the cabinet makes a controversial remark, that person does not step down."

Fukuda, concerned about this situation in Japan, has stated that he would reveal a new set of diplomatic guidelines intended to rebuild Japan's diplomacy toward Asia, keeping in mind the "Fukuda Doctrine," a basic policy toward Southeast Asia asserted by his father, the late former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, and envisioning the establishment of an East Asian Community.

Fukuda decided to visit the US out of strong concern that although Japan-US ties are viewed as being in good shape, their maintenance depends solely on the personal relationship between Koizumi and US President Bush.

In addition, during his stay in Washington, where the number of pro-Japanese members of Congress and government officials are declining, Fukuda intends to see firsthand how much "differences in perception" of issues involving Japan exist through exchanges of views with American leaders.

There are growing calls within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, particularly among veteran lawmakers, for Fukuda to lead

other lawmakers in widening Japan's network of contacts with US leaders, as evidenced by remarks by a former cabinet member as to when to resume US beef imports and the realignment of US forces in Japan: "If Japanese and US lawmakers had a broader network of connections, these issues would be resolved more easily."

13) Japan to carry out spot inspections of meat-processing plants to ease public concern about US beef

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 10, 2006

As measures to allay public concern about the safety of US beef, the government decided yesterday to dispatch Japanese inspectors to the US to carry out spot inspections on a regular basis of meat-processing plants with licenses to ship beef to Japan after it resumes US beef imports, according to some government sources. The US has also indicated a willingness to accept Japan's plan.

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By underscoring such an approach, the two governments hope to win public understanding toward a resumption of trade in US beef.

According to informed sources, inspectors from the Health, Labor, and Welfare Ministry and the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Ministry will join unannounced inspections by the US Agriculture Department. In public hearings last month between the two ministries and consumers, some called for this measure. The government also plans to carry out inspections of meatpackers by Japanese inspectors before resuming imports and to strengthen inspections at the border, like airports, even after reopening its market. The government will shortly present these measures to the US as preconditions for resuming imports.

14) Fisheries Agency to establish firm to promote more eating of whale meat

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
May 10, 2006

The Fisheries Agency and the Institute of Cetacean Research announced yesterday that they would jointly establish a company to promote sales of meat obtained from research whaling. They plan to develop new customers, such as hospitals, and also target individuals by using the Internet.

Owing to expanded research whaling, the supply of whale meat has expanded from 1,700-1,800 tons from the 1990s to 5,500 tons in 2006. However, sales routes have been limited mainly to traditional whale meat restaurants.

By capitalizing on the low-calories found in whale meat, the new company intends to develop new customers, such as hospitals, supermarkets, and restaurant chains.

15) Number of suicides reach 30,000 for eighth consecutive year, experts cite widening income disparity as major cause

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 10, 2006

The number of people who committed suicide in Japan last year is likely to top 30,000 for the eighth consecutive year. According to a survey by the National Police Agency (NPA), the number of suicides was over 30,000 for the seven years in a row from 1998 through 2004. In 2005, 28,240 suicide cases have been reported to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) as of last November, 423 more than a year ago. Since MHLW has set a more limited definition of "suicide" than NPA, the number of suicides tabulated by NPA is 1,000 to 2,000 more than that of MHLW. Given this, it is now almost certain that the number statement of suicides to be announced by NPA will exceed 30,000. Some experts attribute the growing number of people who commit suicide to the widening wealth gap in society. The government is likely to be urged to come up with more effective measures to help prevent suicides.

NPA targets the nation's overall population (including foreigners) in working out its statistics and also regards as a suicide even a case in which the cause of death was unknown when the body was found but was later concluded to have been a suicide through investigation. However, MHLW targets only Japanese

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nationals in Japan and includes in its tally only cases in which the death certificate specifies the cause of death as suicide. As a result, NPA presented 32,325 as the number of suicides in 2004, while MHLW came up with 30,247, about 2,000 less than that of NPA.

16) LDP Upper House members, including Aoki, calling for arm-twisting approach in reaction to slow Diet deliberations on important bills

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Abridged slightly)
May 10, 2006

With less than 30 days left for deliberations in the current Diet session, the hard-line argument is gaining ground in the Liberal Democratic Party that the lawmakers should speed up deliberations and railroad important bills, such as a bill to amend the Basic Education Law, through the Diet. Though a minor extension of the Diet may be possible, the hardline argument is ascribable to growing discontent in the Upper House with a delay in deliberations in the Lower House. But the largest opposition party, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), is reacting strongly to such calls.

The LDP held an executive liaison meeting yesterday in which Upper House executives, beginning with Mikio Aoki, who heads the LDP caucus in the Upper House, complained about the Lower House's management of Diet affairs. One said, "(The ruling bloc) should clearly demonstrate that it holds two-thirds of the Lower House seats." Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe also subscribed to the arm-twisting argument, saying to the press after the meeting, "If deliberations do not go anywhere and things do not move forward as a result, we should take a vote."

Discontent is growing in the Upper House with the ruling bloc's failure to set the pace in the Lower House's management of the Diet. The government submitted 89 bills to the Diet in the current session. Of them, only 30 bills had cleared the Diet as of yesterday. Despite the fact that the ruling coalition garnered a two-thirds of the Lower House seats as a result of the election last September, the ratio of successful bills remains at 33.7%, the same as last year's. In addition, deliberations on important bills are lagging behind schedule, such as a bill to amend the Basic Education Law and a bill to revise the Organized Crime Law to make conspiracy a crime.

The Upper House's anxiety was also fueled by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's rejection of an extension of the Diet session and Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Hiroyuki Hosoda's adamant stance to keep harmony with the opposition bloc. LDP Upper House Secretary General Toranosuke Katayama complained in a press

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conference yesterday, "Because the term of the Diet session is fixed, a delay in receiving (bills) from the Lower House will take its toll on our remaining time."

The adoption of any arm-twisting approach by the ruling bloc is certain to draw a backlash from Minshuto. Minshuto Upper House Diet affairs chief Kenji Hirata warned the LDP yesterday: "We can handle anything, including the ruling bloc's attempt to ram a bill through the Diet. We will not hesitate to boycott deliberations."

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17) Ruling coalition gives up submitting national referendum to current Diet session along with Minshuto

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top Play) (Full)
May 10, 2006

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner New Komeito yesterday gave up on submitting to the current Diet session jointly with the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) a national referendum bill that would set procedures for amending the Constitution.

The ruling coalition has determined that it would be impossible to continue consultations since Minshuto President Ichiro Ozawa stated yesterday in a press conference that his party was unable to approve the idea of introducing the bill together with the two ruling parties.

The LDP and New Komeito will look for a possibility of handling the bill in their own way. Since the ongoing session will close on June 18, many in the two parties are saying that it is not necessary to submit the bill early. Whether the ruling coalition will present the bill to the current session remains unknown.

The ruling and opposition camps have been at odds over such issues as whether other state affairs should be subjected to the bill and whether the minimum age for granting voting rights should be lowered to 18. It has been difficult for the three parties to settle differences of opinions.

Ozawa stressed yesterday that his party had no intention to make concessions to the ruling camp, stating: "Minshuto has its own views, and they should be accepted."

In a joint meeting last evening of Minshuto's constitutional research councils of Upper and Lower House members, a general agreement was reached that if the ruling coalition submitted its bill, the party should present its own bill.

18) Minshuto President Ozawa explains reason for abstaining from Lower House plenary session, saying, "I cannot work soon after eating because of heart disease"

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
May 10, 2006

At a press conference yesterday, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa explained his absence from a plenary session of the House of Representatives:

"Since I was hospitalized for heart disease several years ago, my doctor told me not to work soon after having a meal. So I have followed my doctor's advice. I want you to understand."

Ozawa was admitted with cardiac angina in June 1999. Since he assumed the presidency of the largest opposition party in April, he attended the first plenary session as Minshuto president, but he has been absent seven times in row, including yesterday's session.

Ozawa said:

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"I have declined to attend official breakfast and luncheon meetings. I participate in important sessions, changing my schedule. But I have abstained from sessions (Lower House full sessions starting at 1:00 p.m. and other sessions) that take place around noon."

A senior Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker made a critical comment on Ozawa: "Attending plenary sessions is the duty of a politician. What will he do about luncheons with foreign dignitaries if he becomes prime minister?"

SCHIEFFER